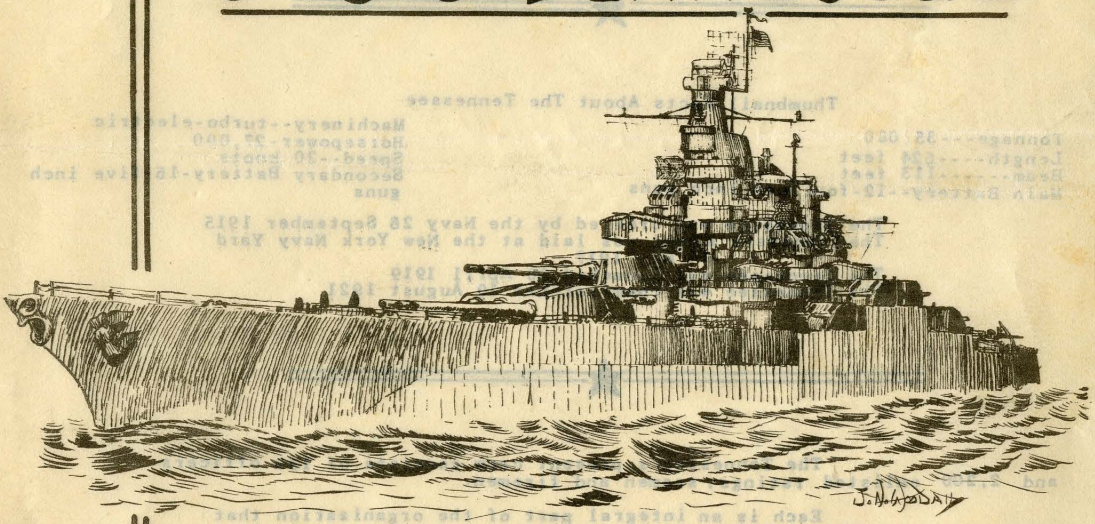
USS Tennessee



OCTOBER • 1945 • DECEMBER

- TOKYO
- WAKAYAMA
- SINGAPORE
- COLOMBO
- CAPETOWN
- PHILADELPHIA

Harley F. Cope
Captain U.S. Navy
Commanding

D.J. Wagner
Commander U.S. Navy
Executive Officer

V.F. Wadsworth
Commander U.S. Naval Reserve
Gunnery Officer

J.W. Mac Murray
Lieut. Comdr. U.S. Navy
First Lieutenant

C.F. Storey, M.D.
Commander, U.S. Navy
Medical Officer

E.W. Abbot
Commander U.S. Navy
Navigator

C.W. Hart
Lieut. Comdr. U.S. Navy
Engineer Officer

Charles Di Pirro
Lieut. Comdr. U.S. Naval Reserve
Communication Officer

G.T. Waite
Lieut. Comdr. U.S. Navy
Supply Officer

Thumbnail Facts About The Tennessee

Tonnage---35,000
Length----624 feet
Beam------113 feet
Main Battery--12-fourteen inch guns
Machinery--turbo-electric
Horsepower-27,000
Speed--20 knots
Secondary Battery-16-five inch guns

The Tennessee was ordered by the Navy 28 September 1915
The Tennessee's keel was laid at the New York Navy Yard
14 May 1917
The Tennessee was launched 30 April 1919
The Tennessee was commissioned 10 August 1921

The Tennessee's present crew consists of 130 officers and 2,200 enlisted ratings, seamen and firemen.

Each is an integral part of the organization that makes the heart of the Tennessee beat.

Probably in no other organization known to man does the work of the individual, as a part of the team, count more than in working and fighting a modern man-of-war. The Tennessee takes pride in its fighting team.

"... Ships are to little purpose without skillful seamen."

—HAKLUYT

THE U.S.S. TENNESSEE
A Brief History

The peacetime career of the Tennessee was much the same as that of any other American Battleship. She cruised, and trained, and through the years gained a reputation. This is a reputation of which the ship is proud, She was known as a "Happy" Ship." One which could always be counted on to place high in all fleet competition, and she excelled in gunnery.

Her first shots fired in anger shattered the peaceful routine of a Sunday morning in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on 7 December 1941, within a few moments after the first Japanese bombs fell. The ship was hit by two bombs, but, with her guns manned, the Tennessee shot down five of the attacking aircraft. For two days after the attack the ship kept her screws turning to keep away the burning oil from other vessels' bunkers.

Still afloat and still able to steam, the ship was given hasty repairs and assumed duty as a part of the line interposed between the Hawaiian Islands and possible Japanese surface attack. She was on this duty during the Battle of Midway. Again she was refitted, and departed for Alaskan waters, participating in the Aleutian Campaign.

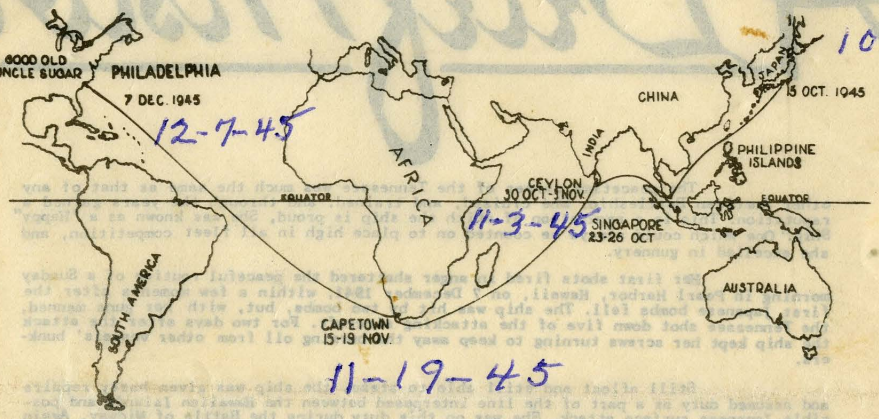
As the pace of the war speeded, so did the activities of the Tennessee. The mighty fire power of her main batteries helped to soften up the islands of Kwajalein, Tarawa and atolls of the Marshall Islands. She fired her main battery at the Jap positions during the diversionary attack on Kavieng, New Ireland, while allied troops in the South Pacific under Admiral William F. Halsey landed at Emirau, thus flanking the enemy bases of Rabual and Kavieng.

At the Kavieng bombardment, the Tennessee was straddled by a salvo of Jap fire from shore batteries, but was undamaged. At Saipan, she was hit by a shell from a Jap shore battery, and silenced the guns which were firing at her in the next salvo. Repairs were quickly made and the ship returned to fight in the invasion of Guam. The Tennessee's next assignment was in the campaign which led to the recapture of the Philippine Islands. The ship shelled in advance of troop landings on Leyte.

The next assignment was her greatest, and the greatest fought by any navy in exclusively surface combat during the Second World War. It was the battle of Surigao Strait. As a part of the force under Vice Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf, U. S. Navy the Tennessee was in the battle line that night as the Jap Fleet closed. Vice Admiral Oldendorf withheld the fire of his ships until the Jap battle force had come in to 20,000 yards. In the 13 minutes after "Commence Firing" was signalled, the Tennessee fired 13 salvos from her main battery, more than any other vessel engaged. Jap losses in the battle included two battleships, two cruisers, and four destroyers. American naval losses were nil; one destroyer was damaged.

The final great beachhead of the war was Okinawa, and the Tennessee was there. For seven days prior to the landing of troops the Tennessee and other ships delivered a heavy bombardment against selected targets. The landings took place Easter Sunday morning, 1 April, 1945. U. S. Army Troops, U. S. Marines -- all part of the Tenth Army -- streamed ashore, but the work of the Tennessee and her sister vessels was not finished. Naval bombardment was called for in support of the ground forces. On 12 April, during heavy enemy air attacks, the Tennessee was hit by a crashing *Kamikaze* plane. The ship remained in the fight, despite this, for about a month before retiring for emergency repairs. The Tennessee then headed back for Okinawa, and she was there when the Japanese surrendered. (con't. on next page)

....Homeward Bound



For a considerable part of the Okinawa Campaign, and also for the concurrent actions in the East China Sea, the Tennessee carried the flag of Vice Admiral Oldendorf. The ship served as Admiral Oldendorf's flag in Japanese Empire waters during the covering activities incident to the occupation of Japan by the U. S. Army, after the surrender.

For the Tennessee it has been a long and hard war. The ship has participated in 15 engagements and, in addition, the occupation of Japan. She has fired more main battery, secondary battery and anti-aircraft ammunition than any other battleship in the Navy.

There are shipmates of ours who are not on board. Fortyfour of them will never come back. Others, badly wounded, were transferred from the ship. In the joy and happiness that comes with victory for our arms and those of our allies, we pause out of respect to these shipmates who are not now answering to the muster.

44 lost at Okinawa

"....Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanched land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The enternal note of sadness in."

--MATTHEW ARNOLD